

# PROSPECT;

OR

## VIEW OF THE MORAL WORLD.

BY ELIHU PALMER.

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*Comments upon the Sacred Writings of the Jews and Christians. Exodus Chapter 9.*

**I**N our last comment we entered particularly into an enquiry respecting the extraordinary matters and miraculous details contained in this chapter. It will be necessary now to pursue the subject still further; for there is still remaining on hand a mass of incoherent stuff which ought to be subjected to severe inspection, otherwise it will be impossible to preserve pure and immaculate the character of Almighty God. The frogs and the lice which had been formed by the dexterous management of the Jewish conjurers, cut a splendid figure; but they were fruitlessly employed in the service of the God of Moses, being, as the history shews, incompetent to produce the desired effect. Pharaoh the royal tyrant still remains inflexible, and invites, by his obstinacy, still further severities from the theocratic power by which he had been so often threatened. It became therefore necessary for Moses and Aaron in conjunction with their God, to invent new kinds of terrific calamities to soften, if possible, the obdurate heart of Pharaoh. For this purpose they manufactured flies by wholesale, and filled the houses of the enemies of God's chosen people, and covered over the whole land with these pestiferous insects. This seems to produce some trifling effect upon the hard heart of the Egyptian tyrant and extorted from him a promise of temporary duration, *that he would let the people go*. In all this business we see neither the majesty of the Supreme Being, nor the correct calculations of any intellectual agent whatever. The most prominent and important reflection that presents itself after reading and examining this strange story, is this—is God possessed of

infinite wisdom and power, and if so, were not these two properties abundantly sufficient,—completely competent to effectuate every important purpose necessary to the honour of the divine government or useful to the human race? Why then all this temporizing with Pharaoh king of Egypt? Why did the Jewish god suffer himself to be so often defeated? Why should the hard heartedness of the Egyptian king triumph over the omnipotence of Jehovah? If he had chosen the Jews as his peculiar people, as the favorites of his divine affections, it is fair to presume that he would protect them upon all occasions and encircle them with the efficacious plenitude of all his attributes. The fact, however is, that he never chose the Jews or any other people to be the separate and distinct objects of his attachment; his perfections demonstrate the contrary, and prove that all beings, sensitive and intelligent, are equally entitled to the protecting influence of his benignity and that they share in the full flowing bounties of his benevolence. The partialities and the imperfections of man have induced him to form very erroneous conceptions of divine power; he forgets in contemplating his own deficiencies—in comparing the motives and results of his own conduct, that there exists in nature a power extremely different and distinct, a being of infinite and incomprehensible energies concerning whose essential existence and our own, all comparison partakes only of contempt and degradation. The true Theism of nature has been more injured by the Jewish theology than by any other consideration whatever. The mythological tales of the Greeks and the Romans—the rencounters of their Gods with earthly beings have lost all the sacredness of their influence, and serve only at present as matter of exalted amusement; but the divine character presumed to be connected with the Jewish theology, renders it a system noxious to the principles of virtue, and hostile to all the moral sympathies of man. The Jewish god is a monster, and ought to be held in abhorrence by all the friends to truth and human happiness.



## COMMUNICATION

Of the Religion of Deism compared with the Christian Religion, and the superiority of the former over the latter.

CONCLUDED FROM OUR LAST.

The Jews did not believe the first chapters of Genesis to be fact. Muimonides, one of the most learned and celebrated of the Jewish authors who lived in the eleventh century, says, in his book *MORE NEBACHIM*. We ought not to understand nor take according to the letter that which is written in the book of the creation, (the book of Genesis.) Taken, says he, according to the letter, especially with respect to the work of four days, it gives the most absurd and extravagant ideas of God.

But the church of Rome having set up its new religion which it called Christianity, and invented the creed which it named the apostles creed, in which it calls Jesus *the only son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary*, things of which it is impossible that man or woman can have any idea, and consequently no belief but in words, and for which there is no authority but the idle story of Joseph's dream in the first chapter of Matthew, which any designing impostor or foolish fanatic might make, it then manufactured the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, and the allegorical tree of life and tree of knowledge into real trees, contrary to the belief of the first christians, and for which there is not the least authority in any of the books of the New Testament, for in none of them is there any mention made of such place as the Garden of Eden, nor of any thing that is said to have happened there.

But the church of Rome could not erect the person called Jesus into a Saviour of the World without making the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, though the New Testament, as before observed, gives no authority for it. All at once the allegorical tree of knowledge became, according to the church, a real tree, the fruit of it.

real fruit, and the eating of it sinful. As priest-craft was always the enemy of knowledge, because priest-craft supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance, it was consistent with its policy to make the acquisition of knowledge a real sin.

The church of Rome having done this, it then brings forward Jesus the son of Mary as suffering death to redeem mankind from sin, which Adam, it says, had brought into the world by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But as it is impossible for reason to believe such a story because it can see no reason for it, nor have any evidence of it, the church then tells us we must not regard our reason, but must *believe*, as it were, and that through thick and thin, as if God had given man reason like a plaything, or a rattle, on purpose to make fun of him. Reason is the forbidden tree of priest-craft, and may serve to explain the allegory of the forbidden tree of knowledge, for we may reasonably suppose the allegory had some meaning and application at the time it was invented. It was the practice of the eastern nations to convey their meaning by allegory, and relate it in the manner of fact. Jesus followed the same method, yet nobody ever supposed the allegory or parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, the Ten Virgins, &c. were facts. Why then should the tree of knowledge, which is far more romantic in idea than the parable in the New Testament are, be supposed to be a real tree.\* The answer to this is, because the church could not make its new fangled system, which it called Christianity, hold together without it. To have made Christ to die on account of an allegorical tree would have been too bare-faced a fable.

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\* The remark of Emperor Julien, on the story of the Tree of Knowledge is worth observing. "If," said he, "there ever had been, or could be, a Tree of Knowledge, instead of God forbidding man to eat thereof, it would be that of which he would order him to eat the most."



But the account, as it is given of Jesus in the New Testament, even visionary as it is, does not support the creed of the church that he died for the redemption of the world. According to that account he was crucified and buried on the Friday and rose again in good health on the Sunday morning, for we do not hear that he was sick. This cannot be called dying, and is rather making fun of death than suffering it. There are thousands of men and women also, who, if they could know they should come back again in good health in about thirty-six hours, would prefer such kind of death for the sake of the experiment, and to know what the other side of the grave was. Why then should that which would be only a voyage of curious amusement to us be magnified into merit and sufferings in him? If a God he could not suffer death, for immortality cannot die, and as a man his death could be no more than the death of any other person.

The belief of the redemption of Jesus Christ is altogether an invention of the church of Rome and not the doctrine of the New Testament. What the writers of the New Testament attempt to prove by the story of Jesus is, the *resurrection of the same body from the grave*, which was the belief of the Pharisees, in opposition to the Sadducees (a sect of Jews) who denied it. Paul, who was brought up a Pharisee, labours hard at this point for it, was the creed of his own Pharisaical church. The XV chap. 1 of Corinthians is full of supposed cases and assertions about the resurrection of the same body, but there is not a word in it about redemption. This chapter makes part of the funeral service of the Episcopal church. The dogma of the redemption is the fable of priest-craft invented since the time the New Testament was compiled, and the agreeable delusion of it suited with the depravity of immoral livers. When men are taught to ascribe all their crimes and vices to the temptations of the Devil, and to believe that Jesus, by his death, rubs all off and pays their passage to heaven gratis, they become as careless in morals as a spendthrift would be of money, were he told that his father had engaged to pay off all his scores.

It is a doctrine, not only dangerous to morals in this world, but to our happiness in the next world, because it holds out such a cheap, easy, and lazy way of getting to heaven as has a tendency to induce men to hug the delusion of it to their own injury.

But there are times when men have serious thoughts, and it is at such times when they begin to think, that they begin to doubt the truth of the Christian Religion, and well they may, for it is too fanciful and too full of conjecture, inconsistency, improbability, and irrationality, to afford consolation to the thoughtful man. His reason revolts against his creed. He sees that none of its articles are proved, or can be proved. He may believe that such a person as is called Jesus (for Christ was not his name) was born and grew to be a man, because it is no more than a natural and probable case. But who is to prove he is the son of God, that he was begotten by the Holy Ghost? Of these things there can be no proof, and that which admits not of proof, and is against the laws of probability and the order of nature, which God himself has established, is not an object for belief. God has not given man reason to embarrass him, but to prevent his being imposed upon.

He may believe that Jesus was crucified, because many others were crucified, but who is to prove he was crucified *for the sins of the world*? This article has no evidence not even in the New Testament, ; and if it had, where is the proof that the New Testament, in relating things neither probable nor proveable, is to be believed as true? When an article in a creed does not admit of proof nor of probability the salvo is to call it revelation; But this is only putting one difficulty in the place of another, for it is as impossible to prove a thing to be revelation as it is to prove that Mary was gotten with child by the Holy Ghost.

Here it is that the religion of Deism is superior to the Christian religion. It is free from all those invented and torturing articles that shock our reason or injure our humanity, and with which the Christian religion abounds.



Its creed is pure and sublimely simple. It believes in God and there it rests. It honours reason as the choicest gift of God to man, and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator displayed in the creation; and reposing itself on his protection, both here and hereafter, it avoids all presumptuous beliefs, and rejects, as the fabulous inventions of men, all books pretending to revelation.

T. P.

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*Profession of faith of a Savoyard Curate, from  
Rousseau, continued from our last.*

It is thus that, contemplating God in his works, and studying him in those attributes which it imports me to know, I learn by degrees to extend that imperfect and confined idea I at first formed of the supreme Being. But if this idea becomes thus more grand and noble, it is proportionably less adapted to the weakness of the human understanding. In proportion as my mind approaches eternal light, its lightness dazzles and confounds me; so that I am forced to give up all those mean and earthly images which assist my imagination. God is no longer a corporeal and perceptible Being: the supreme Intelligence, which governs the world, is no longer the world itself: but in vain I endeavour to raise my thoughts to a conception of his essence. When I reflect that it is he who gives life and activity to that living and active substance, which moves and governs animated bodies; when I am told that my soul is a spiritual being, and that God also is a spirit, I am incensed at this debasement of the divine essence, as if God and my soul were of the same nature; as if God was not the only absolute, the only truly active being, perceiving, thinking and willing of himself, from whom his creatures derive thought, activity, will, liberty and existence. We are free only because it is his will that

we should be so : his inexplicable substance being. with respect to our souls, such as our souls are in regard to our bodies. I know nothing of his having created matter, bodies, spirits, or the world. The idea of creation confounds me and surpasses my conception, though I believe as much of it as I am able to conceive : but I know that he hath formed the universe, and all that exists in the most consummate order. God is doubtless eternal, but I am incapacitated to conceive an idea of eternity. Why then should I amuse myself with words? All that I conceive is, that he existed before all things, that he exists with them, and will exist after them, if they should ever have an end. That a Being, whose essence is inconceivable, should give existence to other beings, is at best obscure and incomprehensible to our ideas ; but that something and nothing should be reciprocally converted into each other, is a palpable contradiction, a most manifest absurdity.

God is intelligent ; but in what manner ? Man is intelligent by the act of reasoning, but the supreme intelligence lies under no necessity to reason. He requires neither premises, nor consequences ; not even the simple form of a proposition : his knowledge is purely intuitive ; he beholds equally what is and will be : all truths are to him as one idea, as all places are but one point, and all times one moment. Human power acts by the use of means, the divine power in and of itself. God is powerful because he is willing, his will constituting his power.

*To be continued.*

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